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## **California Emerging Technology Fund Calls for National Policy on Affordable Broadband Rate**

### ***New Poll Shows Large Disparities in Home Broadband Use in California***

**San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA – July 8, 2014** – The California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) in partnership with The Field Poll today released results of a new survey examining the depth of the Digital Divide in California. CETF, a non-profit foundation, was set up by the California Public Utilities Commission in 2005 to break down barriers to broadband deployment and adoption based on statewide goals.

The poll found that home broadband adoption rates have stagnated over the past few years, leaving the hardest-to-reach Californians without an essential tool to access the educational, employment and civic engagement opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency. The statewide goal is to achieve 80% home adoption by 2017, with no single demographic group or region below 70%.

According to The Field Poll, demographic groups with home broadband adoption rates that fall more than 10 percentage points below the 2014 state home broadband adoption\* average of 75% include:

<b>Not a high school graduate (32%)</b>	<b>Spanish-speaking Latinos (46%) All Latinos (63%)</b>
<b>65 or older (47%)</b>	<b>Household income of less than \$20,000 (53%)</b>
<b>People with disabilities (59%)</b>	<b>Non-citizens (60%)</b>

“These findings are a sobering reminder that while we live in a state renowned for technology and innovation, the Digital Divide is real and impacting millions of Californians. Fully one-quarter of California households do not have high-speed Internet at home. This is not acceptable,” said Sunne Wright McPeak, President and CEO of the California Emerging Technology Fund.

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\*This percentage includes adults accessing the Internet at home with a smartphone or through DSL, cable, satellite or fiber optic connections to a home desktop, laptop or tablet computer.

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“On the brighter side, 6 in 10 of those who do not use the Internet at home suggested they might be interested if they had access to affordable broadband and equipment and the skills to use it. This should serve as a wake-up call to the Federal Communications Commission and elected leaders that the nation needs an affordable broadband rate and sustainable programs to address the literacy needs of low-income residents if we want our country to be competitive,” McPeak said.

### **Poverty and Broadband Adoption**

While progress has been made since initial polling data showed California at 55% home broadband adoption in 2008, the stakes are even higher now. It is nearly impossible to find employment without at having at least basic digital skills, and economic self-sufficiency is the only pathway out of poverty.

“We must recognize that the Digital Divide is both a manifestation of, and driver of, the economic divide. These survey findings indicate that a large swath of Californians, notably Spanish-speakers, low-income residents and those without at least a high school education, exhibit significant disparities in their access and use of the Internet. And because digital connectivity is crucial to gaining economic empowerment in the digital age, this is a recipe for leaving a significant share of Californians behind. In today's world and tomorrow's future, economic and social opportunity are dependent on access to affordable high-speed Internet at home,” said Dr. Manuel Pastor, Professor of Geography and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California.

### **Older Californians and Broadband Adoption**

Older Californians are among the least-connected, according to the survey, which raises critical quality-of-life issues for this group.

“Far too many older adults are being left behind. Often, these are our parents and grandparents. This has huge implications for their health and welfare, personal fulfillment and social connectedness,” said CETF Board Secretary Barbara O’Connor. “Businesses, governments and non-profits must work to reduce broadband adoption barriers by implementing affordable high-speed Internet access at home for older adults, integrating technology into the delivery of government services, and providing digital literacy training, particularly in the area of health and financial empowerment.”

### **Usage Patterns by Smartphones and Computing Devices**

With the explosion of smartphones, the survey examined how people use the Internet from home for different activities depending on whether they mostly or only used a computer or whether they only used a smartphone. Higher percentages of poor households, Latinos, African-Americans and non-citizens said they only use the smartphone to connect at home.

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While both types of users cited entertainment and social media as their top activities, “smartphone only users” were much less likely to visit government or community web sites, bank online or transfer funds to family members, get health or medical information or communicate with their doctor or take a class online.

### **Education and Broadband Adoption**

“While mobile phones are essential devices, they are not enough to help poor Californians access many of the services they need to break out of poverty or close the education Achievement Gap,” McPeak said. For example, California public school students are now required to take assessment tests on a computing device and those without daily experience at home using a desktop, laptop or tablet will be at a disadvantage.

The poll found that parents who have a broadband connection other than a smartphone at home were highly likely to go online at home to help their children learn (84%) and to obtain information about their children’s homework and grades from the school website (75%).

“As technology is integrated in the classroom, poor students who only have smartphone access to the online world when they go home will fall farther behind and we all will be worse off for it. This is a call to action for government, industry and philanthropic groups to work to finally close the Digital Divide in California,” McPeak said.

**For full poll results, please go to <http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2476.pdf>**

### **How to Subscribe to Affordable Broadband at Home**

CETF partners with the Stride Contact Center, an independent, non-profit entity that provides free telephone consultations on how to find discount broadband service where you live. For more information, call 1-888-491-5982.

### **About the California Emerging Technology Fund**

*The mission of CETF is to close the Digital Divide in California by breaking down barriers to high-speed Internet access at home. The goal is to reach 98% of all residences with broadband infrastructure and to achieve 80% home adoption by 2017. This statewide goal can only be accomplished if the following specific hard-to-reach target communities achieve at least a 70% adoption rate: low-income populations, Latino households, rural communities, and people with disabilities. For more information, please visit [www.cetfund.org](http://www.cetfund.org).*